

Submitted by: John C. Thomas, 78 Benton, Glastonbury CT

Good Evening Members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is John C. Thomas. I am a resident of Glastonbury and I am an alumnus of Charter Oak State College.

Charter Oak was a godsend to me when I found myself in the midst of an unanticipated career transition in 2010. First of all, Charter Oak afforded me the opportunity to wrap my previous forays into higher education into a meaningful degree program. I didn't have to start from square one and I had the option to gain credit through testing and portfolio review. Charter Oak's tuition, among all the state colleges, was the most affordable. All of these factors helped me to keep my tuition costs as low as possible.

As an adult learner, Charter Oak's flexibility was also something that appealed to me. I took my classes exclusively online. The asynchronous nature of the online classroom was a great boon to me because I could manage my school and personal schedules to my best advantage.

Because Charter Oak caters to the adult learner I think it was easier to integrate my past work experiences into the classroom, which enhanced the overall educational experience. Conversely, I was able to immediately connect classroom theory into the workplace. This dynamic was, no doubt, instrumental in helping to qualify me for my role as executive director at a local nonprofit animal welfare agency.

But there is a rub: Just because Charter Oak was more affordable doesn't mean it was easy on the pocketbook. I still took out student loans. Lots of them. I could not have graduated without them. , With respect to the Governor's budget recommendations, if the notion that education is the catalyst for a dynamic economy then raising tuitions and having students saddle themselves with onerous debt is not only counterintuitive, it is counterproductive. This is not just about young people transitioning into post-secondary education but an entire cohort of adult learners who are trying to retool for the 21st century economy. Now is not the time to cut budgets to the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities. Rather, now is the time to maintain the funding to the colleges and universities. I urge you to reject Governor Malloy's recommendations.

Thank you for your consideration.